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A Gandhāran *stūpa* as depicted in the Lotus Sutra*

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(1) Descriptions of the *stūpa* in the Lotus Sutra

At the beginning of the eleventh chapter of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* or the Lotus Sutra, named *Stūpasamdarśana* “Manifestation of a *Stūpa*”, a *stūpa* suddenly appeared in the middle of Śākyamuni Buddha’s assembly while he was preaching the Lotus Sutra. In the *stūpa*, a body of a *buddha* of the past, namely Prabhūtaratna, was sitting. He came to praise Śākyamuni’s teaching of the Lotus Sutra. This *stūpa* as described in this chapter resembles the *stūpas* in Gandhāra, while differing from those in Central, South and the Eastern part of India.

Below, we shall see the descriptions of the *stūpa* found in the Sanskrit version. My translation here is based on the Kern-Nanjio edition (abbr. KN), the *editio princeps*. When its readings differ from those in the so-called Kashgar manuscript (abbr. O) — though purchased in Kashgar, it was actually discovered in Khādaliq, dating back probably to the 8th century —, the translation of the latter is inserted with the sign “O”.

The *stūpa* is depicted as follows (KN 239~241)¹:

(KN 239) Then, in front of the Lord, arose a *stūpa*, consisting of seven precious substances, from a spot on the Earth. In the middle of the [O. Lord’s] assembly, (the *stūpa*) of five hundred *yojanas* (ca. 3,500 km) in height and of proportionate circumference, arose and stood up in the sky. It was aglitter, [very] beautiful, [shining in various ways,] nicely decorated with five [O. hundreds of] thousands of terraces (*vedikā*) with railings attached with flower(-ornament)s (*puṣpagrahaṇī*)², adorned with many [O. hundreds of] thousands of arched-niches (*toraṇa*)³, hung [O. decorated] with [O. hundreds of] thousands of banners and streamers, hung (KN. *pralambita*~; O. *avasikta*~) with [O. hundreds of] thousands of garlands of jewels, hung with [O.

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¹ The following part has parallels in the four Chinese translations, namely (1) the *Satan fentuoli jing* 薩曇分陀利經, anonymous, possibly translated in the *Xijin* (西晉) Dynasty, T. 9, no. 265, 197a11~14; (2) the *Zhengfahua jing* 正法華經, translated by Dharmarakṣa (竺法護) in 286 C.E., T. 9, no. 263, 102b22~c26; (3) the *Miaofalianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, translated by Kumārajīva (鳩摩羅什) in 406 C.E., T. 9, no. 262, 32b17~c18 = the *Tianpin Miaofalianhua jing* 添品妙法蓮華經, translated by Jñānagupta and Dharmagupta, 601 or 602 C.E., T. 9, no. 264, 166c29~167b1.

² Cf. von Hinüber 2016: 9ff.; *ib.* 2016a: 30f.

³ Cf. *kānshi* 龕室 “arched-niches” in Kumārajīva’s translation, T. 9, no. 262, 32b19.

hundreds of] thousands of pieces of cloth and bells (KN. *paṭṭaghaṇṭā*; O. *paṭṭadāma*-: “garlands made of cloth”), [O. with the hundreds of thousands of ringing bells], emitting the fragrance of *tamālapattra* (*Xanthochymus pictorius*) and sandalwood, whose scent filled this whole world. (The *stūpa*’s) row of *chattras*, made of the seven precious substances — namely, gold, silver, lapis lazuli, sapphire, emerald, (KN 240) red coral, and chrysoberyl —, rose (KN. *samucchrita*~; O. *anuprāpta*~ “reached”) as high as the divine palaces of the Four Great Kings. The gods of “the Thirty-three Heaven” scattered, bestrewed and spread divine *māṇḍārava*- and great *māṇḍārava* flowers on that *stūpa* (O. The gods of “the Thirty-three Heaven” let fall a great rain of divine flowers, [namely] divine *māṇḍārava*- and great *māṇḍārava* flowers, thus scattered, bestrewed and spread them on that *stūpa*). [O “In addition to them, hundreds of thousands of gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, human beings and non-human beings worshipped, honoured, respected, revered and paid homage to that *stūpa* with all (sorts of) flowers, all (kinds of) incense, all (kinds of) garlands, hundreds of thousands of ointments, powders, cloth, umbrellas, flags, banners, streamers, and by the playing of hundreds of billions of musical instruments.”]⁴

From the jewelled *stūpa*, then, the following voice issued forth: “Excellent, excellent, O Lord Śākyamuni! You have well expounded this religious discourse of the Lotus of the True Dharma. So it is, O Lord!; so it is, O Sugata!” [O. “It is excellent, excellent, O Lord Śākyamuni, that you show and expound this religious discourse which is a compendium for *bodhisatvas*, an elucidation of the equality of great wisdom and which all *buddhas* embrace. So it is, O Lord!; so it is, O Lord Śākyamuni, as you have explained. You have expounded well this religious discourse and I came here to listen to this religious discourse.”]⁵

Then, having seen that great jewelled *stūpa* [O. which, having emerged from the ground, was] standing up in the sky, in the atmosphere, the fourfold assembly (of monks, nuns, male lay followers and female lay followers), [O. became thrilled], became delighted, filled with joy, delight and happiness [O. -], and then [O.-], they [O. all] stood up from their seats, held out their joined hands and remained standing [O. standing, while looking up at the *stūpa*].

(Hereafter is a free translation:) Then, a *bodhisatva*, named Mahāpratibhāna, asked the Buddha why that jewelled *stūpa* had appeared and who had uttered those words. The Buddha replied as follows: “In that *stūpa*, there is the complete body of Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna. He had lived in a world called Ratnavīśuddhā, which is located beyond immeasurable thousands of billions of worlds away in the East⁶. He, being a *bodhisatva*, (KN 241) having listened to the Lotus Sutra, had attained perfect enlightenment. Therefore, when he entered *parinirvāṇa*,

⁴ These sentences are found only in the Central Asian manuscripts, incl. O and Kumārajīva’s translation.

⁵ These sentences, which are extant only in O, a Sanskrit fragment from Central Asia, dating back to the 5th century and the Chinese translations by Dharmarakṣa (T. 9, no. 263; translated in 286 C.E.) and Kumārajīva (T. 9, no. 262; translated in 406 C.E.), are very important for the research of the origins of Mahāyāna Buddhism as well as the Lotus Sutra. I have already discussed this issue (see Karashima 2015: 185f.).

⁶ O and the Gilgit manuscript as well as the Tibetan and Chinese translations read “in the East”, while Nepalese manuscripts read “beneath”.

he entrusted monks with the making of a great jewelled *stūpa* to hold his complete body, and made a vow, saying: ‘May this *stūpa* of mine, containing my body-frame, arise in whatever world, when a *buddha* expounds the Lotus Sutra and may my body-frame applaud him.’”

(2) The *stūpa* in the Lotus Sutra agrees with those in Gandhāra

In the above-cited descriptions of the *stūpa*, we find a phrase “adorned with many [O. hundreds of] thousands of arched-niches (*torāṇa*)” (KN 239.4f. *bahutorāṇasahasraiḥ pratimaṇḍitaḥ*; O. *bahutorāṇasatasahasrasupratimaṇḍitaḥ*). The Sanskrit word *torāṇa* means usually “gate; arch”. However, the phrase “many hundreds of thousands of *torāṇas*” here does not mean gates outside a *stūpa* at the entrance from the four cardinal directions as seen in Bharhut, Sanchi *etc.* As Kumārajīva translated it as *kanshi* 龕室 meaning “arched-niche” (T. 9, no. 262, 32b19)⁷, *torāṇa* here must mean “arched-niche” made in the walls of each layer of a *stūpa*. As its upper part is arched, such a niche must have been called *torāṇa* as well.⁸ *Stūpas* with a large number of arched-niches can be seen in “Greater Gandhāra” (present-day Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan).



Fig. 1 *Torāṇas* (“gates”) at Sanchi⁹

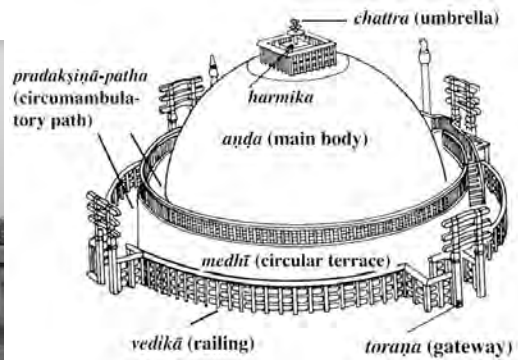


Fig. 2 Structural features of Sanchi *stūpa*¹⁰



Fig. 3, 4. *Torāṇas* (“arched-niches”) seen on the small *stūpa* from Loriyan Tangal, Peshawar District, Pakistan. Photo taken in 1895.¹¹

⁷ Dharmarakṣa translated *torāṇa* as *chuangyong xuanhu* 窓牖軒戶 (“windows and doors [or windows]”) (T. 9, no. 263, 102b26).

⁸ As far as I know, this meaning of *torāṇa* is not attested; cf. Acharya 1934: 246–254; *ib.* 1946: 216–222.

⁹ Photo taken by Katarzyna Marciniak.

¹⁰ The present author processed an image found on the internet.

¹¹ © British Library Board, Photo 1003/(1037). Permission to reproduce the photo was granted by The British Library Board (8/March/2018).

Moreover, a row of umbrellas (*chattra*) on the top of this jewelled *stūpa* in the Lotus Sutra, which is described as “rose (O. reached) as high as the divine palaces of the Four Great Kings”, clearly shows the characteristics of *stūpas* in the Gandhāra region, too.

In ancient India, it was customary for an attendant to carry an umbrella to shade a king or a noble man from the sun. Consequently, there is a statue of the Buddha over which an umbrella is placed to express people’s respect for him. Out of the same respectful feelings, multiple umbrellas were placed on top of a *stūpa*.



Fig. 5 A statue of the Buddha with an umbrella¹²



Fig. 6 A crystal *stūpa* with five umbrellas atop it¹³

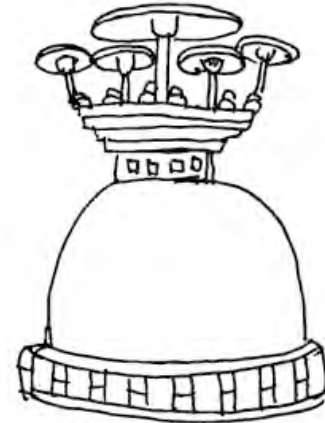


Fig. 7 A drawing of a *stūpa* with many umbrellas atop it¹⁴

Umbrellas, which had been placed next to each other on a *stūpa*, later became the layered circular umbrella-like discs on the domes of *stūpas*. For example, both the *stūpas* in Sanchi (from around the beginning of the first century; see Fig. 2, 3) and in Amarāvātī (from around the 2nd century), have round bases (*medhi*), on which massive hemispherical domes (*aṇḍa* “egg”) or inverted bowl-shaped mounds have been constructed. The dome on each *stūpa* has a square pavilion (*harmika*) and a pole (*yaṣṭi*) — which was supposed to pass through the dome (*aṇḍa*) to the ground — on its top. Two- or three-layered umbrella-like discs (*chattra*) are attached to the pole. On the top of the *stūpa* in Sanchi, there are layers of three umbrella-like discs; while on the one in Amarāvātī, two umbrella-like discs were laid side-by-side (cf. Fig. 8). Thus, on the mainland of India, no high towering *stūpa* exists, but rather only a few umbrella-like discs are placed on the top of a *stūpa*.

In the case of *stūpas* in Gandhāra, there is a cylindrical barrel between the base (*medhi*) and the hemispherical dome (*aṇḍa*), — arched-niches were made around the cylindrical barrel. On the dome, there is a square pavilion (*harmika*), topped by a long

¹² 5th–6th c.; discovered in Sarnath, preserved presently at Banaras Hindu University. Dr. Ye Shaoyong’s drawing based on a photograph found in Satō Sōtarō 佐藤宗太郎, *Kodai Indo no Ishibori* 古代インドの石彫 [Stone Sculptures in Ancient India], Tokyo 1970: Kawade Shobō Shinsha 河出書房新社, pl. 50.

¹³ Discovered in Mansera, in a private collection, Kurita 2003b, p. 303, no. 940.

¹⁴ Dr. Ye Shaoyong’s drawing based on a painting in Ajanta (1st c. B.C.E.).

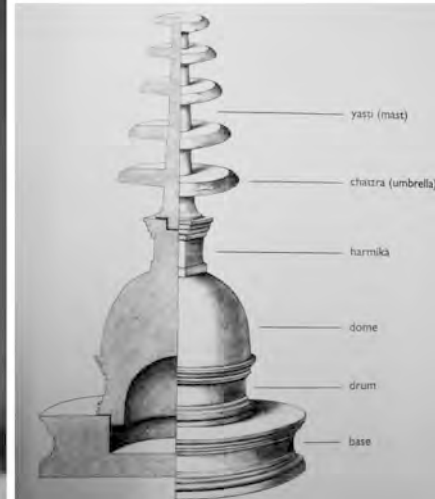
pole (*yasti*) with multi-layered umbrella-like discs (*chattra*). This Gāndhāran-type *stūpa* was the origin of the multi-storeyed *stūpas* or pagodas built in East Asia.

Fig. 8 Miniature *stūpa*
from Gandhāra¹⁵ →

↓ Fig. 9 Depiction of the
Great *Stūpa* at Amarāvati¹⁶



↓ Fig. 10 Structure of a minia-
ture *stūpa* in Gandhāra¹⁷



According to the travelogues of a Chinese monk, named Huisheng 惠生, and Song Yun 宋雲, who visited Gandhāra together in 520 C.E., they saw a huge *stūpa*, namely the *Stūpa* of Queli (雀離浮圖), built by King Kaniṣka (re. ca. 127~ca. 150) in Peshawar. According to them¹⁸, the *stūpa* was twelve or thirteen storeys high, topped with an iron pole with thirteen layers of metal discs. Altogether the height of the *stūpa* was 700 *chis* (ca. 175 m).¹⁹

¹⁵ Hirayama Ikuo Silk Road Museum, H 100165; Tanabe 2007: 206.

¹⁶ From NHK 1994: 230.

¹⁷ Drawing by Elizabeth Errington, in Jongeward *et al.* 2012: 70.

¹⁸ Queli 雀離 seems to be a transliteration (MC. tsjak lje).

¹⁹ Huisheng's travelogue, namely *BeiWei seng Huisheng shi Xiyu ji* 北魏僧惠生使西域記 ("A Record of the Western Regions by the envoy and monk Huisheng of the Northern Wei", T. 51, no. 2086) reads as follows: "... they arrived at the city of Gandhāra. Two hundred years after the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddha, King Kaniṣka had built the Queli *stūpa*. It is twelve storeys and seven hundred *chis* (ca. 175 m) high from the ground and its platform is about three hundred paces (ca. 457 m) wide. The lower part (陞) (of its cylindrical barrel) is made completely of sculptured stone. Inside the *stūpa*, an infinite variety of Buddhist services are carried out. The golden discs (*chattras*) are shining brilliantly, jewelled bells are ringing in harmony. It is the best *stūpa* in the Western Regions. (867b2~7. 至乾陀羅城。有佛涅槃後二百年，國王迦尼迦所造雀離浮圖，凡十二重，去地七百尺，基廣三百餘步，悉用文石爲陞。塔內佛事千變萬化。金盤晃朗，寶鐸和鳴。西域浮圖最爲第一。)。 Cf. Deeg 2007: 87.

Song Yun's travelogue is quoted in the fifth *juan* of Yang Xuanzhi (楊衒之)'s *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 ("Records of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang"; ca. 547 C.E.; T. 51, no. 2092) in juxtaposition to another travelogue by a certain Daorong 道榮 (cf. Deeg 2007: 65f.): "... they arrived at the city of Gandhāra. Seven *li* southeast of the city, there is the Queli *stūpa*. ... When the Tathāgata was in this world, ... while pointing to the east of the city, he said: 'Two hundred years after my entering *nirvāṇa*, there will be a king, named Kaniṣka. He will build a *stūpa* there.' Two hundred years after the Buddha's entering *nirvāṇa*, a king, named Kaniṣka, really did appear. When he went out (of the city) and walked around the east (out) of the city, he saw four boys, building a *stūpa* by piling up cow dung. When it became about three *chis* (ca. 75 cm) high, they disappeared suddenly. ... Being perplexed by the boys(' making this cow dung *stūpa*), the king immediately built a *stūpa* to

Thus, the *stūpas* in the Gandhāra region rose high with umbrella-like discs (*chattra*) atop, rising high in the sky, just as described in the *Stūpasamdarśana* chapter in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*.



Fig. 11 A picture of two Buddhas' sitting together as in the *Stūpasamdarśana* chapter in the Lotus Sutra; Hodar, Gilgit, Pakistan²⁰

(3) The newer strata of the Lotus Sutra were composed in Gandhāra

As I have demonstrated (Karashima 2015: 163f.), I assume that the Lotus Sutra consists of the following three strata:

The first stratum: from the *Upāya* (II) to the “Prophecies to Adepts and Novices” (IX) (KN 29~223).

The second stratum: 11 chapters from the “Dharma Master” (X) to “Tathāgata’s Mystical Powers” (XX) (KN 224~394), as well as the “Introduction” (I) (KN 1~28) and “Entrustment” (XXVII) (KN 484~487). Probably the latter half of “Plant” (V) (KN 131.13~143.6), which has no parallels in Kumārajīva’s translation, also belongs to this stratum.

The third stratum: all other SP chapters (XXI~XXVI) (KN 395~483) and the latter half

cover it. The *stūpa* made of cow dung gradually grew higher and higher and started protruding outside the *stūpa* (made by the king to cover the former). When it had become four hundred *chis* (ca. 100 m) high from the ground, it stopped (growing). The king, thereupon, broadened the foundation of the *stūpa* to more than three hundred paces (ca. 460 m) wide. — The *Account of Daorong* relates: ‘three hundred and ninety paces (ca. 600 m)’ —. From there (i.e. the foundation), (people) erected a wood structure and thus, it could match (the height of the cow dung *stūpa*) — The *Account of Daorong* states: ‘Each (piece of the timber) is three *zhang* (ca. 7.5 m) high. All the lower and upper parts (陞階) (of the cylindrical barrel of the *stūpa*), steps, bearing blocks (櫨) and trusses (栱) are made of sculptured stone, upon which the timber is assembled. Altogether it is thirteen storeys high.’ —. Upon (the *stūpa*), there is a three-hundred-*chi* (ca. 75 m)-high iron pillar (*yaṣṭi*), to which thirteen layers of golden discs (*chattras*) are attached. Altogether (the *stūpa*) is 700 *chis* (ca. 175 m) high from the ground — the *Account of Daorong* says: ‘The iron pillar is eighty-eight *chis* (ca. 22 m) high and eighty spans (*wei* 圍) in circumference. Golden discs (*chattras*) are placed in fifteen layers. Altogether it is sixty-three *zhangs* and two *chis* (ca. 158 m) high from the ground.’” (1021a25~b10. 至乾陀羅城。東南七里，有雀離浮圖。…… 乃是，如來在世之時，與弟子遊化此土，指城東曰：“我入涅槃後三百年，有國王，名迦尼色迦。此處起浮圖。” 佛入涅槃後二百年來，果有國王，字迦尼色迦。出游城東，見四童子累牛糞爲塔，可高三尺，俄然即失。…… 王怪此童子，即作塔籠之。糞塔漸高，挺出於外，去地四百尺，然後止。王始更廣塔基三百餘步 — 道榮傳云：“三百九十步” — 。從此構木始得齊等 — 道榮傳云：“其高三丈。悉用文石[(= v.l.) ← 木]爲陞、階砌、櫨[v.l. 櫨]、栱[← 拱]，上構衆木。凡十三級。” —。上有鐵柱，高三[read 三百]尺。金槃十三重。合去地七百尺 — 道榮傳云：“鐵柱八十八尺，八十圍。金盤十五重。去地六十三丈二尺。” —。). Cf. Wang 1984: 239f.

²⁰ From Harald Hauptmann, “Felsbildkunst am Oberen Indus”, in: *Gandhara: Das buddhistische Erbe Pakistans: Legenden, Klöster und Paradiese*, Mainz 200: Philipp von Zabern, p. 353.

of the “*Stūpasamdarśana*” (XI) — , where stories about Devadatta’s previous life and a daughter of a dragon king are found (KN 256~266).

Though the precise ages of the compositions of these strata and layers are unknown, they were probably formed in the order, A, B, C and D (see above).

It is apparent that the *stūpa* as depicted in the *Stūpasamdarśana* Chapter in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* was modelled on real *stūpas* in the Gandhāra region. This indicates that the newer part of the Lotus Sutra was composed in this region, while the earlier part was composed elsewhere in India — I assume it could have taken place in South East India.

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